

SUBSTITUTE SPECIFICATION

DESCRIPTION

TRANSISOR AND CVD APPARATUS USED TO DEPOSIT

GATE INSULATING FILM THEREOF

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to an improvement in a transistor and, more particularly, to a method for improving the reliability thereof when the transistor is continuously driven for a long period of time at a relatively high temperature.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0002] Among field-effect transistors each of which typically comprises at least a source electrode, a drain electrode, a gate electrode, a semiconductor film, and a gate insulating film each interposed between the source/drain electrodes and the gate electrode, a field-effect transistor comprising an amorphous silicon nitride film deposited by a CVD (Chemical Vapor Deposition) method or the like as the gate insulating film has excellent ON/OFF-state current characteristics so that, in recent years, it has been used also as a switching element for a liquid crystal display device or the like.

[0003] When a thin film such as a gate insulating film is deposited by using a CVD apparatus, cleaning of the inside of the reaction chamber of the CVD apparatus is performed by using a cleaning gas such as NF_3 , CF_4 , or SF_6 in each given deposition cycle to improve the maintenance property of the CVD apparatus and thereby improve the operability thereof. At this time, if fluorine as one component of the cleaning gas remains in the reaction chamber and

is caught in the film being deposited, it causes the problem of significantly degrading the transistor characteristics.

[0004] As a method for solving this problem, the reduction of the concentration of fluorine contained in the semiconductor film to 1.0×10^{19} atoms/cm³ or less is disclosed in Patent Gazette 1. As means for reducing the concentration of fluorine, the removal of residual fluorine by generating a hydrogen plasma after the cleaning of the reaction chamber is disclosed. It is reported that, by reducing the concentration of fluorine contained in the semiconductor film, an increase in the amount of shift in threshold voltage when the transistor is operated for 10 minutes under the condition that the substrate temperature is 25.0 ± 3.0 °C can be reduced and the reliability of the transistor can be thereby improved.

[0005] As an example of an approach which reduces the concentration of fluorine in a thin film other than a thin film composing the transistor such as the semiconductor film or the gate insulating film, a method is disclosed in Patent Gazette 2. In accordance with the method, when a silicon dioxide film is disposed as a protective film for an insulating substrate between the transistor and the insulating substrate, the concentration of fluorine in the silicon dioxide film is reduced to 1×10^{19} atoms/cm³ or less, preferably to 1×10^{18} atoms/cm³ or less, by spraying heated gas to an a-Si film deposited by a plasma CVD method and thereby oxidizing the a-Si film into the silicon dioxide film.

Patent Gazette 1: Japanese Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 2002-329869 (page 2, FIG. 1)

Patent Gazette 2: Japanese Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 2003-124469 (page 2, FIG. 1)

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] In the method disclosed in Patent Gazette 1, however, evaluation is performed at a relatively low temperature of about 25 °C during short-period driving that continues for only

10 minutes. Therefore, it is unknown whether or not the transistor can provide excellent reliability even when it is continuously driven for a long period of time (on the orders of several to several tens of hours) at a relatively high temperature (e.g., about 80 °C), like a transistor as a switching element for a pixel electrode in a liquid crystal display device.

5 [0007] In the method which removes the residual fluorine in the reaction chamber therefrom by the hydrogen plasma process, a sufficient effect may not be obtained occasionally depending on the process conditions. Accordingly, it is difficult to stably maintain the excellent characteristics in the reaction chamber.

[0008] The present invention has been achieved in view of the foregoing circumstances
10 and a primary object thereof is to enable a transistor adapted to suppress characteristic degradation resulting from fluorine contained in the thin film composing the transistor to provide excellent reliability even when it is continuously driven for a long period of time at a relatively high temperature.

[0009] To attain the object, the present invention focuses attention on the gate insulating
15 film of the transistor and reduces the concentration of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film to 1×10^{20} atoms/cm³ or less, preferably to 1×10^{19} atoms/cm³ or less.

[0010] When the gate insulating film is deposited by using a CVD apparatus, the surface
of an electrode is composed of a non-porous layer in the reaction chamber of the CVD
apparatus as specific means for thus implementing a reduction in the concentration of the
20 contained fluorine.

[0011] As a result, carriers trapped by fluorine in the surface of the gate insulating film in
contact with the semiconductor film are reduced so that the ON-state current characteristic of
the transistor is improved. At the same time, fluorine ions in the gate insulating film are

reduced so that the threshold characteristic of the transistor is improved. In addition, even when the transistor is continuously driven for a long period of time at a relatively high temperature, excellent reliability is obtainable.

[0012] When the gate insulating film is deposited by using a CVD apparatus, the root
5 cause of the remaining of fluorine in the porous layer (e.g., formed by an anodic oxidation process for forming a protective film) as the surface of the electrode in the reaction chamber thereof can be removed. Compared with the case where the process of removing residual fluorine by using a hydrogen plasma is performed, the production of a faulty transistor resulting from insufficient removal of fluorine due to variations in process conditions and the
10 resultant reduction in yield can be suppressed.

[0013] In the structure described above, the transistor is preferably of a field-effect type. The gate insulating film is preferably an amorphous silicon nitride film. The gate insulating film is preferably deposited by a CVD method. The transistor described above is suitable for use as a switching element for a pixel electrode portion in a liquid crystal display device.

15 [0014] By adjusting the concentration of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film of a transistor to 1×10^{20} atoms/cm³ or less, preferably to 1×10^{19} atoms/cm³ or less, the present invention not only allows excellent initial characteristics to be obtained but also allows an improvement in reliability even when a transistor is continuously driven for a long period of time at a relative high temperature, as in the case where it is used in a liquid crystal display
20 device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view schematically showing an overall structure of a field-effect thin-film transistor according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a schematic view showing an overall structure of a CVD apparatus used to deposit a gate insulating film;

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view schematically showing a structure of a surface of an anode in the reaction chamber of the CVD apparatus;

5 FIG. 4 is a view schematically showing a structure of a surface of an anode in the reaction chamber of a conventional CVD apparatus, which corresponds to FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 is a characteristic view showing the relationship between the concentration of fluorine contained in a gate insulating film and the threshold voltage of a transistor; and

10 FIG. 6 is a characteristic view showing the relationship between the concentration of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film and the ON-state current characteristic of the transistor.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0017] Referring to the drawings, the embodiment of the present invention will be
15 described herein below. It is to be noted that the present invention is not limited to the following embodiment and can be designed appropriately as necessary.

[0018] FIG. 1 schematically shows a cross section of a field-effect thin-film transistor according to the present embodiment. The transistor is used as, e.g., a switching element for a pixel electrode portion in a liquid crystal display device.

20 [0019] The foregoing transistor comprises an insulating substrate (1) made of, e.g., glass or the like. A gate electrode (2) made of Ta, Al, Mo, or the like is formed on the substrate (1). A gate insulating film (3) composed of, e.g., an amorphous silicon nitride film with a thickness of, e.g., 4000 Å is formed on the gate electrode (2) to cover substantially the entire surface of

the substrate (1). An amorphous silicon semiconductor film (4) as a semiconductor film with a thickness of, e.g., 2000 Å is formed on the gate insulating film (3) with the portion thereof corresponding to the gate electrode (2) being disposed at the center. A pair of n⁺ amorphous silicon semiconductor films (5) each having a thickness of, e.g., 500 Å and doped with phosphorus are formed on the two regions of the amorphous silicon semiconductor film (4) with the gate electrode (2) interposed therebetween to serve as semiconductor films other than the amorphous silicon semiconductor film (4). A source electrode (6) and a drain electrode (7) each made of Ti, Mo, Al, or the like are formed over the individual n⁺ amorphous silicon semiconductor films (5) and the respective portions of the gate insulating film (3) continued thereto.

[0020] A description will be given next to the process steps of fabricating the transistor thus constituted. First, the gate electrode (2) is formed on the substrate (1) through deposition and patterning. Then, a diode parallel-plate plasma-enhanced CVD apparatus is used and, after the cleaning of the reaction chamber thereof using NF₃ gas, the gate insulating film (3) is deposited. Thereafter, a first semiconductor film for obtaining the amorphous silicon semiconductor film (4) and a second semiconductor film for obtaining the n⁺ amorphous silicon semiconductor films (5) are deposited individually. Then, a multilayer film comprising the first and second semiconductor films is patterned into an island configuration to form the amorphous silicon semiconductor film (4) first.

[0021] Further, the source electrode (6) and the drain electrode (7) are formed over the specified portions of the gate insulating film (3) and the multilayer film through deposition and patterning. Then, by using the pattern of the source electrode (6) and the drain electrode (7), etching for dividing the second semiconductor film is performed with respect thereto to

form the n^+ amorphous silicon semiconductor films (5). By the process described above, the field-effect thin-film transistor is completed.

[0022] A description will be given herein below to the reaction chamber of the plasma CVD apparatus mentioned above with reference to FIG. 2. In the reaction chamber (50), an anode (52) made of aluminum and having a large number of gas supply holes (51) is disposed. Unlike in the conventional case, an anodic oxidation process for forming a protective film has not been performed with respect to the surface of the anode (52). Accordingly, as schematically shown in enlarged relation in FIG. 3, the surface of the anode (52) is composed of an aluminum layer (70) as a non-porous film which is exposed in an unprocessed state.

[0023] Specifically, in the conventional case, an anodic oxidation protective film (61) made of alumite is formed on the surface of the aluminum layer (70) by the anodic oxidation process for forming the protective film, as schematically shown in FIG. 4. Because the anodic oxidation protective film (61) is porous, fluorine is likely to be trapped by the insides of fine holes therein, which causes a large amount of fluorine to remain in the reaction chamber (51) after cleaning. By contrast, the present embodiment has eliminated the root cause described above by forming the aluminum layer (70) as the surface of the anode (52), i.e., by not forming the anodic oxidation protective film (61) as formed conventionally on the surface of the aluminum layer (70). As means for implementing the non-porous surface, a new non-porous layer may also be formed on the surface of the aluminum layer (70).

[0024] For comparison, by using a conventional CVD apparatus in which the surface of the anode (52) is composed of the anodic oxidation protective film (61), cleaning of the inside of the reaction chamber (50) was performed and then a hydrogen plasma process was performed continuously for 60 seconds under conditions such that the output of a radio-

frequency power source (RF power source) was 1000 W and the flow rate of gas was 3L/min (at 1.013×10^5 Pa and 0 °C). As a result, the concentration of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film (3) was 3×10^{20} atoms/cm³. By contrast, in the present embodiment, values of 7×10^{18} to 1×10^{19} atoms/cm³ were steadily obtained under the same conditions.

5 [0025] Although the foregoing embodiment has described the case where the two semiconductor layers, which are the amorphous silicon semiconductor film (4) and the n⁺ amorphous silicon semiconductor film (5), are used, the present invention is also applicable to a transistor using a single-layer semiconductor film.

[0026] Although the foregoing embodiment has described the case where the gate
10 insulating film (3) is an amorphous silicon nitride film, the present invention is also applicable to a transistor in which the gate insulating film (3) is a film other than the amorphous silicon nitride film such as, e.g., an amorphous silicon dioxide film, an amorphous aluminum oxide film, or the like.

[0027] Although the foregoing embodiment has used the anode (52) having the surface
15 thereof composed of the non-porous layer in the reaction chamber (50) to reduce the concentration of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film (3) when the gate insulating film (3) of the transistor is deposited by using the CVD apparatus, means for reducing the concentration of the contained fluorine is not particularly limited. Another means can be used as appropriate.

20 [0028] Although the foregoing embodiment has described the case where a plasma CVD method is used to deposit the gate insulating film (3) of the transistor, the present invention is also applicable to the case using a sputtering method such as, e.g., RF sputtering, ECR sputtering, or reactive sputtering. In the case of using a CVD method also, the present

invention is applicable to a transistor in which the gate insulating film (3) is deposited by a method other than plasma CVD method such as a thermal CVD method or an optical CVD method.

[0029] Although the foregoing embodiment has described the case where the transistor is used for an application as a switching element for a pixel electrode portion in a liquid crystal display device, the present invention is also applicable to a transistor used for another application.

[0030] - Experimental Examples -

A description will be given herein below to an experiment performed to examine the concentration [Unit: atoms/cm³] of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film of a transistor and the respective initial characteristics of the threshold (V_{th} [Unit: V]) and ON-state current (I_{on} [Unit: nA]) thereof. As for the concentration of the contained fluorine, it was determined by depositing an amorphous silicon nitride film under the same conditions as for a gate insulating film on a silicon wafer and measuring the concentration of fluorine contained in the amorphous silicon nitride film by secondary ion mass spectrometry (SIMS). As the transistor, a transistor in which the ratio between the channel width W and the channel length L was W/L = 4 was used.

[0031] The characteristic view of FIG. 5 shows the initial characteristic between the concentration of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film and the threshold voltage of the transistor. The characteristic view of FIG. 6 shows the initial characteristic between the concentration of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film and the ON-state current characteristic of the transistor.

[0032] From the drawings, it will be understood that the initial transistor characteristics

are excellent provided that the concentration of the contained fluorine is 1×10^{20} atoms/cm³ or less, preferably 1×10^{19} atoms/cm³ or less.

[0033] A description will be given next to an experiment performed to examine the relationship between the concentration of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film and the reliability of the transistor during the long-period driving thereof at a high temperature.

[0034] In the conventional case (see Patent Gazette 2), the reliability was evaluated under conditions such that each of the source and drain was grounded, the gate DC voltage was 30 V, and the drive time was 10 minutes in an environment where the temperature was 25.0 ± 3.0 °C. However, when a field-effect thin-film transistor is applied to, e.g., a liquid crystal display device, the guarantee of the operation at a higher temperature for a longer period of time is requested so that the evaluation of the reliability was performed herein under conditions such that each of the source/drain electrodes was grounded, the gate DC voltage was 15 V, and the drive time was 500 hours in an environment where the temperature was 80.0 ± 3.0 °C. As an index for judging the reliability, an amount of shift ΔV_{th} [Unit: V] as a value obtained by subtracting the threshold voltage after a reliability evaluation test from the initial threshold voltage of the transistor was evaluated.

[0035] As a result, in the transistor in which the concentration of the contained fluorine was 2.7×10^{20} atoms/cm³, the amount of shift was $\Delta V_{th} = 5.0$ V, while $\Delta V_{th} = 3.0$ V was measured in the transistor in which the concentration of the contained fluorine was 1.0×10^{20} atoms/cm³. This proved that the reliability under high-temperature and long-period conditions improved more greatly as the concentration of fluorine contained in the gate insulating film was lower.

[0036] The present invention can be used for a typical common transistor and is

particularly preferable for a transistor which is continuously driven for a long period of time at a relatively high temperature, such as a transistor used as a switching element for a pixel electrode portion in a liquid crystal display device.